National Media Museum Collecting Policy Statement

Governing Body:	**Board of Trustees of the Science Museum**
Date for approval:	**2 March 2010**
Date for review:	**March 2014**

Context
NMeM exists to develop, manage and make useful for the public the UK's national collections relating to the media. All new collecting is conducted with reference to these often definitive holdings.

These collections reflect its remit as the primary National resource in its subject areas. They are unique in their breadth and depth, covering all aspects of the media – technical, commercial, popular and creative. While other major institutions may have exemplary holdings in more focused aspects of the media, the NMeM's potential to attract scholars, donors, vendors or patrons must suggest that their status is that of the primary National Collection of each of the media it represents.

This brief statement, to be considered in conjunction with the NMSI Collecting Strategy, sets out why and how the National Media Museum (NMeM) adds new items to its collection; its MLA-Accreditation Acquisition and Disposal Policy gives full details (including collection history, governing legislation, limitations and procedures). The NMeM's Collection Board will normally review this statement along with the longer document on a five year cycle, in collaboration with the NMSI Collections Group and in consultation with the Museum's Trustee Advisory Committee. The NMSI Board of Trustees and MLA Council will be notified of any significant changes to policy or procedure.

Collecting is a core responsibility of subject curators and is supervised by the NMeM Collections Team, which involves and consults staff from NMSI Corporate & Collections Information for their expert input, as appropriate, to ensure a collaborative approach to implementation.

Mission
The NMeM's mission is to be a world-class museum which inspires people to learn about, engage with and create media. Its permanent collections will consistently provide the UK with the world's best material and visual record of the media.

Policy
Using this collection, NMeM will enable its audiences to explore the artistic, technological, social and cultural impact of the media to understand how different media reflect and shape lives and the world in which we live. This will help people to understand and participate in their heritage, find knowledge for themselves and have a say in the issues that shape their future.

The NMeM already has strong holdings which evidence the art, science and culture of the media. It will build on these to develop a collection of such uniqueness, strength and diversity that it will be automatically considered as the key point of reference for peer institutions, artists, practitioners, academics and visitors.

Continued collecting ensures that we can fulfil this mission into the future. In line with this, curators propose new items – both 'icons' and supporting material or more everyday items – for the Collection because they:

- enable the Museum to provide life enhancing experiences through its current cultural programme;
- evidence key new work in media disciplines and/or significant new products;
- illustrate key human stories in media history;
- represent inventions that are specific to the media and do not have an application in other fields.

The Museum collects in five main subject areas: Photography (incorporating Photographs and Photographic Technology, Cinematography, Television, Radio Broadcast and New Media (including the Web). Collecting is governed by acquisition to sustain narratives and, where appropriate, gap-filling. Broad direction is given by key themes that are periodically reviewed (See Appendix 1).

It collects both actively and reactively, although it is moving towards 'active' collecting, which is achieved through specific acquisition projects; collecting in partnership, acquisition by nurture or as a result of exhibitions or commissioning. Reactive collecting, by contrast, takes selective advantage of the hundreds of

unsolicited donations that the Museum receives each year and responds to opportunities offered by specialist auctions and private vendor sales. The NMeM has an annual Purchase Fund, which allows it to pursue important material offered for sale.

NMeM will collect both for use within the planned projects of its Cultural Plan and for posterity. In the period covered by this edition of the policy, NMeM will be especially concerned on acquiring material which reflects traditional and contemporary (i.e. post-1950) lens-based media, broadcast, and the web and radio media, covering material which is not only primarily British in origin but also which has or been influenced by international practitioners or organisations.

Where appropriate and practicable, NMeM will seek proactively to target and acquire specific archives or groups of seminal work by key influential practitioners and artists in their entirety in order to preserve legacy, and maximise their cultural and commercial potential. It will also work actively alongside and collaboratively with other National Museums to ensure that its holdings complement theirs and that key bodies of work are preserved for the Nation, whilst ensuring that the NMeM's core collection remains of the highest quality and relevance. It will seek the active involvement of the Trustees to help it achieve this ambition.

Where NMeM collects without specifying use, the Collections Board weighs potential future application; collecting for posterity guarantees the Collection's continuing national and international significance and value and this material can be made available on request through the Museum's study and research facilities.

In this context, the NMeM's collecting strategy will be best served through a flexible protocol that allows for the designation of intended acquisitions as destined either to be:

- accessioned into the permanent collection, or
- designated as being held under review for eventual determination that the acquisition (or part thereof in the case of groups of works, collections or archives) may, at the discretion of the Curators and with the approval of the Director, be disposed of in line with the terms of the National Heritage Act, or
- identified as appropriate for handling and study purposes and as such not requiring the archival commitments due to full permanent collection acquisitions.

All new acquisitions are measured against four basic criteria: significance, use, condition and provenance, and the way in which the NMeM Collection has developed, means that there is a secondary collection of duplicate material which will be retained for display treatment, or to facilitate study and learning activity, or for disposal to or exchange with other museums in order to ensure sustainable management in line with the NMSI Collections Management Policies and Procedures.

Appendix 1: Key Themes

A1. NMeM Photography Collection

Photography is ubiquitous and has countless applications. It plays a prominent role in contemporary life. The Photography Collection reflects the medium's diverse cultural histories in order to encourage a greater understanding of what is particular, special and important about it in the visual arts, media, popular culture and everyday life, ensuring that photography's legacies and contemporary relevance is sustained.

A1.1 Photographs

1. **Aesthetics**
   Photography has enormous cultural value as an art form. We will seek to represent the art of photography in its broadest definition, both through its many applications and the aesthetic uses of the medium. We will interpret the relationship between classical and traditional forms of photography, examining the work of international artists and photographers.

2. **Contemporary Relevance**
   Photography's imaginative power touches all our lives. We aim to nurture and preserve the achievements of artists/photographers for the benefit of future generations. We will concentrate on the work of artists and photographers since the 1950s, and support and amplify the work of contemporary practitioners through exhibition and Fellowship programmes, focussing on cotemporary artistic practice.

3. **The Vernacular**
   To maintain the cultural diversity of the National Collection we will address, through research and exhibition, those marginalized, idiosyncratic and divergent uses of photography including elements of itinerant photography, 'snapshots' and amateur practice.

4. **Digital Imaging**
   We shall explore the impact of the growth of digital imaging and technological innovation on the practice of photography, considering the changing nature of the medium and the blurring of traditional distinctions between still and moving and conventional and digital photography.

5. **Colour**
   The theme of colour has resonance not just in photography but also across all the media. We shall disseminate information about colour techniques and undertake research into our existing holdings of photographic technology associated with colour photography.

6. **British Documentary Photography and Photojournalism**
   The National Collection is especially strong in the histories of British Documentary and Photojournalism. We aim to build on these strengths, in particular by collecting complete significant contemporary documentary works, particularly where these overlap with artistic, gallery focussed practice.

7. **Applied Photography**
   Applied Photography is traditionally overlooked in other collections, but is very well represented in ours. We will strengthen these holdings by collecting the best examples of medical, forensic, architectural, industrial, glamour, advertising, editorial and record photography.

1. **Digital Technology**
   The last few years have seen an explosion in the popularity of consumer digital imaging technology The market for traditional silver-based analogue photography has collapsed and sales of digital cameras have eclipsed those of conventional cameras. Several major manufacturers have discontinued the production of conventional cameras and film. Together with a dramatic increase in image resolution, we have seen a merging of technologies whereby, for example, mobile phones with integral digital cameras are competing directly with entry-level digital cameras. New ways of sharing and printing images have appeared – digital photo frames, photo sharing websites such as Flickr, emailing images or printing them using dedicated photo-printers. We intend to acquire key examples of this burgeoning technology to trace the ongoing development and evolution of digital photographic technology.

2. **Specialist Cameras**
   The collection is particularly strong in its representation of cameras for some specialised applications – e.g. stereo, colour and panoramic photography. We will seek to build on this strength through the acquisition of further key examples – in particular, examples of contemporary stereo and panoramic cameras. Again, this may be achieved by the implementation of structured collecting projects.   .

3. **British Camera-Makers**
   The National Photographic Technology Collection is actually international in scope – the camera industry has been dominated since the 1960s by the Far East - by Japan and, now, China. However, as the National Museum we have a responsibility to document the long tradition of British camera making as exemplified by our acquisition of the Gandolfi archive. We shall therefore collect, as part of an ongoing but discrete collecting project, examples of camera technology by key British manufacturers.

4. **Kodak Products**
   To complement our extensive collection acquired as part of the Kodak Museum we must ensure that we collect examples of as many Kodak cameras as possible. There are still a very few gaps in the historic collection but these will be difficult and expensive to fill. We will therefore concentrate our attention in acquiring examples of post-1990 Kodak products. This aligns with our commitment to digital photography

A2. Cinematography

Film is both a recording medium and a potent means of creating fantasy. For over a century it has been a powerful means of global communication, used to reflect and shape ideas and attitudes within societies. Through its Cinematography Collection and programme of films and events, the Museum presents and explores the work of filmmakers and analyses the methods they use to represent the world. We aim to make increasing use of the collection in the Museum's public programme through the development of exhibitions, web, publications and events, and to work with film industry practitioners to develop exhibitions that can feed back into the collection.

1. **Film Production and Dissemination**
   This theme is central to the collection. We explore how films are made and why, examine the inter-relationships between, and various contributions of, the members of the creative team and the development of ideas from concept through to the marketing and distribution of the final film.

2. **Technology and Film**
   We are living through a period of technological upheaval in the production and delivery of film to its audiences. Digital cinema is, after a long gestation, finally emerging. The collection will reflect the impact of changing technologies on the nature of film and film-making, examining how innovation drives creative impetus and vice-versa. We will place this in the context of past and present practice, encouraging dialogue and reflection about how individuals and society are affected by innovation.

3. **Animation**
    Animation has been at the forefront of digital developments in film over the past 20 years, particularly through its application to special effects and the commercial success of animated features. Digital techniques are fast displacing traditional practices and this presents a once-and-only opportunity for the Museum to acquire highly significant and unique elements of animation heritage. The Museum's Animation Gallery and the Bradford Animation Festival are already key resources, and such acquisition will make the Museum an important international centre for the understanding of the history and future of animation.

4. **Auteurs and Others**
    We aim to recognise the work of British and British-based practitioners in the film industry – from producers and directors through actors, designers, writers and technical crew. We aim to increase active engagement with practitioners that will lead to screenings, exhibitions and events, and the acquisition of discrete collections of film and oral history material that will illustrate their creative methods.

5. **Amateur Film-making**
    The making of home-movies and more ambitious amateur films on photographic film declined rapidly in the 1980s with the growth of home video, and that technology is now being supplanted by digital media. Already, the knowledge and memory of how amateur movies were made is disappearing. We aim to acquire discrete items of post-1960s amateur film technology, particularly Super 8, and to research the amateur movie's importance in the wider social context, in partnership with film archives and academic partners.

A3. Television

Television, the transmission of moving pictures over a distance, is one of the profound cultural forces that shape society. Since its inception, television has gradually established itself as the single most powerful mass-medium in history. Today, it is undergoing a massive change in the way content is made, stored, delivered and consumed – driven by innovation and development of digital technology. We will consider the way that changes in television have been technology-led and seek to explain changes in us and in our environments by interpreting television objects and their respective content from a variety of perspectives and within a wide social and historical context.

1. **Historical Perspectives**
    The development and increased popularity of television shaped the second half of the twentieth century. We will examine the evolution of television programme forms, accounting for influences of older and concurrent media; increasing viewer choice via the introduction of the remote control, personal video recorder, multi-channel, and on-demand programme platforms; television advertising as cultural barometer; the funding of public service broadcasting into the 21st century

2. **Analogue to Digital Transition**
    The public often experiences confusion when trying to understand the relationship between *analogue* and *digital,* often fuelled by branding and marketing techniques. In helping our audiences understand this theme, we will acquire and place analogue and digital technologies in their historical, contemporary and technical contexts, in doing so interpreting and explaining the differences.

3. **Impact of Television Technology Development on Other Media**
    Television has changed our relationships with the home environment, our community, and other communications media. We will correlate the post-1950s decline of the cinema through to its recent renaissance by examining the part that television has played in this trend, acknowledging the impact of consumer video recorders and home theatre.

4. **Social Impact of Television Content**
    Television content reflects, amplifies, and sometimes questions existing values in any society, and thus it is a cultural indicator as well as having its own cultural impact. Recognising this, we will examine the changing portrayals of violence, sex and language on television; the viability of watersheds; the impact on crime, moral standards, citizenship etc.

5. **Social Impact of the Television Medium**
Viewing habits have changed significantly over the last fifty years. In understanding how and why this has happened, we will examine how the act of television viewing has engaged the viewer in different ways. With HD and internet television, television has diverged into a series of delivery platforms - one extreme being high-definition, exclusive, and passive, the other low-resolution, inclusive and participatory. We will also acquire to reflect the investment of large sums of money into the latest technology against the reluctance to pay for improved content; global, national, and community-based regional television; what can be learned from the late introduction of broadcast television into communities

6. **Changing Role of Television News**
Changes in technology and the media environment have radically altered news gathering techniques in recent years. We will review the move to twenty-four hour news channels and news on demand, and consider impacts on political coverage and world view.

A4. Radio Broadcast

Radio originated at the beginning of the 20th century, evolving into the dominant means of instantaneous global communication. It is generally agreed that radio's biggest social impacts were felt between the 1920s and the early 1950s. A non-visual medium, radio is particularly well-suited to reflecting and shaping ideas and attitudes within societies through its extension of the sense of hearing in high definition. Radio retrieves the spoken word, retribalising and linking previously disconnected cultures, changing people's world views and sense ratios.

1. **Technological Impacts on Society**
Radio, like television, is an instantaneous broadcast medium. From crystal sets, to valve receivers, technology continued to evolve until today, digital radio offers CD-like quality. In consultation with our colleagues at The Science Museum, we will seek to acquire specific examples which illustrate this along with new platforms for radio, including DAB, satellite and internet radio, and radio via digital television, and related network applications like `listen again' facilities.

2. **Origins of the Medium**
In 1910, with the arrest of the infamous Dr. Crippen and his mistress following a wireless message from S.S. Montrose to New Scotland Yard, this led to more radios on ocean-going vessels. On the 18 October, 1922, the British Broadcasting Company was formed by six radio companies. L.F. Plugge was a pioneer of commercial radio broadcasting to the UK in the 1920s and 1930s, when commercial programmes were transmitted from continental Europe for legal reasons. 31 December 1926 - Government decides to control all broadcasting, the British Broadcasting Corporation was formed. We will collect, again in concert with The Science Museum, artefacts which evidence early developments and the growing influence of radio on the masses.

3. **Radio Programme Production**
Collecting based around how radio programmes are made. Reith restricted the types of programming on the BBC in the name of the public good. The study of various contributions of the creative and technical teams will be made, and celebrated through the acquisition of artefacts which demonstrate the programming process. Although original copies of programmes will not be archived, digital copies will be acquired where appropriate for use in permanent and temporary exhibitions, and made accessible to visitors.

4. **Changing Role of Radio over Time**
We will examine why radio's role in the U.K. was extremely heavily regulated, leading to various cases of pirate radio broadcasts and collect items which illustrate this. As television grew into a mass medium in the 40s and 50s, radio's role changed from an entertainment medium with a complete monopoly of broadcast content to that of a secondary medium. Radio has unquestionably survived and has developed its own unique audiences and characteristics. This will be reflected as the collection develops.

5. **Radio Reception**
Initially, radio receiver sets had a central place in the home due to their expense. Later on, portability was an important factor, enabling people to listen to radio programs anywhere. We will seek to acquire objects which illustrate changes in radio set design, in the process telling a unique story of technology, design, consumerism, materials, techniques of manufacturing, and how people consumed radio.

A5. New Media

With roots stretching back as far as the development of computers in the 1950s, the digital revolution has radically transformed the ways in which media is produced, delivered and consumed, and continues to do so. Within the 'Information Age' images, text, audio and video are exchanged as digital bits of data and the New Media Collection aims to preserve objects and software that will help interpret the cultural impact of this evolution. 'New Media' is an effective term that can be used to encompass the diverse nature in which digital technology has altered traditional media. The New Media Collection aims to represent specific areas such as the internet and gaming, in addition to traversing the boundaries between photography, film, television and radio that have been blurred by digital technology.

1. **Internet and the Web**
   The major catalyst behind the changes forced upon traditional media (television, newspapers and radio) has been the development of the internet. This global interconnected network of computer networks has changed the way we share information and transformed the way society communicates. The internet has provided a democratic platform that has shifted control to the individual and questioned the power of media empires. The Museum will track this phenomenon through objects that have enabled society to get connected and interpret landmark software and websites that have increased the popularity, accessibility and desire to be online.

2. **Media on Demand**
   The proliferation of devices that allow us to access digital content anytime, anywhere, has changed the way people consume media, in text, audio, still and moving image formats. This increase in choice and audience control has transformed people's viewing habits and heightened expectation. We will preserve and examine hardware and software that has enabled this media revolution.

3. **Rise of the Amateur**
   The rise of more affordable computing hardware and software has closed the gap between amateur and professional content creators. The internet lets people bypass traditional media delivery platforms and access an audience of literally millions overnight. We will aim to interpret this hardware and software and promote its use and understanding to our audience.

4. **Videogames**
   Videogames are an essential ingredient in contemporary cultural life and are continually pushing the boundaries of interactive entertainment. In close partnership with Nottingham Trent University, the National Media Museum has formed the National Videogame Archive (NVA); a collection of hardware, original software, marketing material and fan-generated ephemera, the NVA will document and record the vital role videogames play within the national heritage.

5. **Digital Art**
   As technology has developed artists have experimented with new forms of interactivity and sensory output to provoke emotion in the audience. A diverse area covering computer-generated imagery, music, net art, gallery installations and virtual reality, we will aim to preserve and document key works that explore the relationship between art and digital technology.

Appendix 2: Governing Principles

The following is a list of legislation, guidelines and standards which the NMSI must adhere to when dispensing its core functions and activities, and which govern or influence the policy set down in this document. Further, specific information about the scope and relevance of this legislation may be found on-line:

- National Heritage Act (1983)

- Museum's Association Code of Ethics (2007)

- Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (UNESCO, 1970)

- Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003

- Treasure Act 1996

- Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums (DCMS, 2005)

- Spoliation of Works of Art during the Holocaust and World War II period: Statement of Principles and Proposed Actions (NMDC, 1998)

- Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002)

- Health & Safety at Work Act (1974)

- Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (2006)

- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (2002)

- Broadcasting Act, 2009 (and its previous incarnations)